



# DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY,  
A PROGRAM OFFICE WITHIN VA'S OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMINISTRATION

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 3

<<http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/dwn.htm>>

MARCH/APRIL 2005

## Q&A: A DIVERSE, HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORKFORCE

**T**he Honorable R. Allen Pittman, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (HR&A), shares his thoughts on diversity in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

**Q:** With respect to the President's Management Agenda, what are your priorities for HR&A for the next few years?

**Mr. Pittman:** Our priorities revolve around succession planning for the Department of Veterans Affairs. A large portion of the VA workforce is currently at, or rapidly approaching, retirement age. In addition, we are concerned about our ability to recruit and retain employees—especially younger members of the labor force. Included with these concerns is our need to manage the diversity of our workforce, one of the most important factors we have to contend with within VA. Although women and minority men make up approximately 74 percent of VA's total workforce, when we look at their presence within specific grade levels, we see decreasing levels of diversity: 55 percent at GS-13, 50 percent at GS-14, 41 percent at GS-15, and 32 percent at the Senior Executive Service (SES) level.

**Q:** Over the next few years, what will HR&A be doing to ensure that the face of VA's workforce reflects the diverse face of the veterans that we serve?

**Mr. Pittman:** Again, it revolves mostly around two issues: recruitment and retention. When it comes to recruitment, we have to ensure that our outreach programs and recruitment targets address our needs for a diverse, high-quality workforce. That's very crucial. We already have partnerships with various organizations, including veterans service organizations. What we're trying to do now is identify what our needs are in order to be able to recruit and retain the people we need. Internally, we have to do a much better job providing training programs and developmental opportunities for all employees.



VA proudly joined the Nation in celebrating Women's History Month this March. Mr. Pittman delivered the opening remarks at VACO's 2005 Women's History Month Program on March 18, 2005.

In his remarks, Mr. Pittman said that "[w]e absolutely have to do a better job of recognizing women's contributions, but we also have to do a better job of recruiting women into leadership positions." From 2001 to 2004, the percentage of women in GS-13 positions increased from 39 percent to 43 percent; in GS-14 positions, from 32 percent to 43 percent; in GS-15 positions, from 23 percent to 28 percent; and in SES positions, from 14 percent to 21 percent. Mr. Pittman added that "there is ample room for improvement, and we are focusing a lot of attention on it."

In the SES Candidate Development Program, women constituted 46 percent of the class of 2002 and 52 percent of the class of 2004. And over the last three years, the percentage of women in Leadership VA has hovered between 47 and 56 percent. Because these are the two programs from which VA's future senior executives come, Mr. Pittman expects the number of women in SES positions to markedly improve over the next few years.

"It is up to our current senior leadership to make the difference in our efforts to increase the number of women in senior leadership positions in VA.... seeking out capable women with leadership abilities early in their careers, counseling them, mentoring them, and encouraging them every step of the way." ■

### IN THIS ISSUE:

<b>FIELD NOTES</b> News You Can Use	<b>2</b>
<b>WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT</b> Center for Veterans Enterprise	<b>2</b>
<b>DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT</b> Alabama Excellence Award	<b>3</b>
<b>WOMEN'S HISTORY</b> The Women of WASP	<b>3</b>
<b>DM&amp;EEO ONLINE</b> Our Mission	<b>4</b>
<b>DIVERSITY CALENDAR</b> Upcoming Events	<b>4</b>

### BOOKMARKS

- ▶ **African American Federal Executives Association (AAFEA)**  
<http://www.aafea.org>
- ▶ **American Medical Women's Association (AMWA)**  
<http://www.amwa-doc.org>
- ▶ **Association for Women in Science (AWIS)**  
<http://www.awis.org>
- ▶ **Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC)**  
<http://www.fapac.org>
- ▶ **Mobility International USA (MIUSA)**  
<http://www.miusa.org>
- ▶ **National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives (NAHFE)**  
<http://www.nahfe.org>
- ▶ **National Indian Education Association (NIEA)**  
<http://www.niea.htm>
- ▶ **United South and Eastern Tribes (USET)**  
<http://www.usetinc.org>

## FIELD NOTES

### News You Can Use

---

#### GAO on Diversity Management

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released a report, GAO-05-90—Diversity Management: Expert-Identified Leading Practices and Agency Examples. VA was among the 10 agencies selected for their review. The purpose and objectives were to identify the leading diversity best practices. These top nine practices are (1) commitment to diversity as demonstrated and communicated by an organization's top leadership; (2) the inclusion of diversity management in an organization's strategic plan; (3) diversity linked to performance, making the case that a more diverse and inclusive work environment could help improve productivity and individual and organizational performance; (4) measurement of the impact of various aspects of a diversity program; (5) management accountability for the progress of diversity initiatives; (6) succession planning; (7) recruitment; (8) employee involvement in an organization's diversity management; and (9) training for management and staff about diversity management. View the full report at <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-90>.

#### MBDA Declared Top Government Agency for Multicultural Business Opportunities of 2004

The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) was declared the Top Government Agency for Multicultural Business Opportunities of 2004 by over 350,000 diversity business owners. The list was produced by *DiversityBusiness.com* and voting business owners based their decisions on such factors as the volume, consistency, and quality of business opportunities granted to women and minority-owned companies. Of the 20 top government agencies listed, VA ranked 16. For a complete list of winners, visit <http://www.div2000.com/div50>.

## WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

### The Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE)

<http://www.vetbiz.gov>

**Content:** The primary goal of CVE, which promotes business opportunities for veterans, is to support economic empowerment for every veteran entrepreneur and to provide resource assistance for veterans and service-disabled veterans who are considering business ownership. At the CVE Web site, veterans can register their businesses, update their business profile, and search for assistance programs.

#### Employer's Guide

The Conference Board of Canada recently launched *Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities—An Employer's Guide*. VA was the only U.S. Federal agency included as a case study. For more information, visit [http://www.conferenceboard.ca/press/2005/Vis\\_Min\\_Employers\\_Guide.asp](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/press/2005/Vis_Min_Employers_Guide.asp).

#### Winter Sports Clinic in April

More than 350 disabled veterans are expected to participate in the 19th Annual National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic at Snowmass Resort Village in Aspen, Colorado, April 3–8, 2005. The Clinic promotes rehabilitation by instructing severely disabled veterans in adaptive skiing and introducing them to a number of other adaptive recreational activities. Visit <http://www1.va.gov/vetevent/wsc/2005/default.cfm>.



#### VA Employee Featured in *Ebony*

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System is honored to have an employee featured in the April 2005 edition of one of the oldest African-American national publications, *Ebony Magazine*, as one of 30 Leaders of the Future! Elmore Patterson, III, Acting Chief of Fee Basis at age 29, was a 2003 VHA Diversity Advisory Board Summer Enrichment Program intern. He is also a Second Lieutenant in the Army Reserve. Congratulations, Mr. Patterson!

#### New Face at DM&EEO

Through American University's Washington Internships for Native Students, DM&EEO sponsored Heather Busey this spring. Welcome, Ms. Busey!■

**Must-see feature:** The Vendor Information Pages, where veteran entrepreneurs can register their businesses in a database searched by Federal agencies and private businesses.

**Contact info:** VA, CVE (00VE), 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, (202) 303-3260  
**Accessibility:** This site is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998.■

## DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

### CAVHCS Wins 2004 Alabama Excellence Award

Congratulations to the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS)! CAVHCS received the 2004 "Alabama Excellence Award" administered by the Alabama Productivity Center. This is the top award in a three-tier award program known as the Alabama Quality Award Program, which is the state equivalent of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. CAVHCS won the second-tier award, the "Progress Toward Excellence" Award, in 2003. Alabama Quality Award examiners and judges were very impressed with the productivity and quality efforts of CAVHCS, its management, staff, and other stakeholders.

CAVHCS Director, N. Rao Chava, M.D., shared that "At CAVHCS, leadership understands that people are our most valuable asset. As with any award winning organization, diversity of our workforce plays a key role in our success at CAVHCS. Our Annual Diversity Fairs were held in September 2004 where employees learned about the many different cultures of their fellow employees. In 2003, CAVHCS was runner up in the Under Secretary for Health Diversity Award.

"When we think about diversity, people often think about the differences in gender, color, race, ethnicity, culture, dress, etc. Diversity is more than that. Diversity of thoughts, ideas, philosophy, and opinions makes CAVHCS a richer organization. There are two definitions of diversity—difference and variety. Thinking about differences may bring divisiveness. Whereas thinking about variety brings beauty, richness of ideas, and strength of collective decision making.

"Diversity should not lead to stereotyping. Not all women think and act alike. Not all African-Americans think and act alike. Not all Asian Americans think and act alike. At CAVHCS, we value the individual, not by the color of the skin, gender, or ethnicity, but for the contribution to the organization, commitment to the mission, richness of ideas, and soundness of opinions. At CAVHCS, we try to bring the best out of each and every employee by respecting our differences, harvesting rich ideas, and encouraging diverse opinions."

Congratulations on your achievement, CAVHCS!■

## WOMEN'S HISTORY

### The Women of WASP

*Women's History Month is an opportunity to reflect on the contributions of our Nation's women veterans. Their experiences helped to pave the way for women's equality and it is our duty to help preserve and share their stories.*

In 1912, Hazel Ah Ying Lee was born in Portland, Oregon, to parents who had immigrated to the U.S. from China. She was called "the first Chinese American woman to fly military planes in U.S. history" and "the last American woman pilot fatality in World War II," by columnist Margie Boule. On November 25, 1944, Lee died at the age of 32 from fulfilling her duties as a member of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).



*Official WASP Wings*

Members of WASP served as civilians under the Army Air Corp. Lee, like a number of women, ferried airplanes for the Air Transport Command. This was her task when she was involved in a mid-air collision while on a landing approach. Lee died less than two days later from her injuries.

The women of WASP were dismissed from service on December 20, 1944. It was another 26 years (in 1970) before women were allowed to fly military aircraft again. But before that time, a total of 38

women—including Lee—gave their lives flying airplanes for the government during WWII. As civilian pilots, they were not entitled to military benefits; friends and family of these brave women paid to send their bodies home and for burial costs—there were no provisions available from the government.

It was not until 1977 that these women were recognized for their military service. That year, Congress enacted Public Law 96-202 which granted that service of the WASP and other similar groups with service to the Armed Forces "shall be considered active duty for purposes of laws administered by the Veterans' Administration." *Sections of this article taken from Hazel Ah Ying Lee: Women Airforce Service Pilot, World War II, a portrait by Kay Gott. For more information on WASP, visit <http://www.wasp-wwii.org>.*■

## Diversity@Work

newsletter published by the National Office of DM&EEO, a program office within VA's Office of Human Resources & Administration. To subscribe or unsubscribe, e-mail [dmeeo@mail.va.gov](mailto:dmeeo@mail.va.gov).

To join *NewsLink* (a free, weekly electronic news service), e-mail [dmeeo@mail.va.gov](mailto:dmeeo@mail.va.gov) with SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line.

### CONTACT US

#### Mail:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of DM&EEO (06)  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

#### Phone:

(202) 501-1970

#### Fax:

(202) 501-2145

#### E-mail the Editor:

[dmeeo@mail.va.gov](mailto:dmeeo@mail.va.gov)

Visit our Web site, [www.va.gov/dmeeo](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo), for additional staff e-mail addresses.

### OTHER USEFUL LINKS

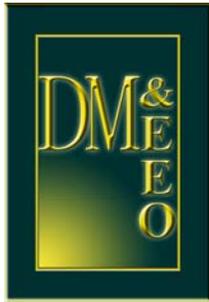
Department of  
Veterans Affairs  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

VA's Office of Human  
Resources & Administration  
<http://www.va.gov/ofcadmin/portal>

VA's Office of  
Resolution Management  
[www.va.gov/orm](http://www.va.gov/orm)

VA's Office of Human  
Resources Management  
and Labor Relations  
[www.va.gov/ohrm](http://www.va.gov/ohrm)

## DM&EEO ONLINE



The mission of DM&EEO is to provide leadership in creating and sustaining a diverse workplace free of discrimination at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Here's a sampling of online tools that can help you promote the employment of veterans, women, minorities, and people with disabilities:

- ▶ Women's History Month Resources
- ▶ Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Resources
- ▶ Professional and Community Organization Links

## 2005 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

### MARCH

**Women's History Month**  
"Women Change America"  
March

**Irish American Heritage Month**  
March

**Deaf History Month**  
March 13-April 15

**Cesar Chavez Day**  
March 31

### APRIL

**National Disabled Veterans  
Winter Sports Clinic**  
April 3-8  
Aspen, Colorado  
<http://www1.va.gov/vetevent/wsc/2005/default.cfm>

**First Annual African American  
Federal Executives Association  
Leadership Development and  
Training Conference EXPO**  
April 5-6  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
<http://www.aafea.org/AAFEA%20Conference.htm>

**National Association of Hispanic  
Federal Executives, Inc. (NAHFE)  
Summit VII**  
April 7-8  
Orlando, Florida  
<http://www.nahfe.org>



**CAREERS & the disABLED  
Magazine's Career Expo for  
People with Disabilities**  
April 7-8  
New York, New York  
May 6  
Boston, Massachusetts  
<http://www.eop.com/cdexponydc.html>

*Looking Ahead:*

**MAY**  
**Asian Pacific American Heritage  
Month**  
May

**Fourth Annual Asian Pacific American  
Federal Career  
Advancement Summit**  
May 3  
Washington, DC  
<http://www.apasummit.gov/schedule.asp>

**Armed Forces Day**  
May 18

---

*For more events,  
visit [www.va.gov/dmeeo](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo)  
and select the Calendar link.*

---